

if page numbers were provided for these keys. Anyone with an interest in the High Country is recommended to buy this book. It is relatively inexpensive and will allow you to easily identify these delightful plants and, once on a first name basis with these common plants, you will be amazed at how many more you will begin

to notice, adding even more enjoyment to your travels of our magnificent High Country.

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## Birds of Prey of Australia: a field guide

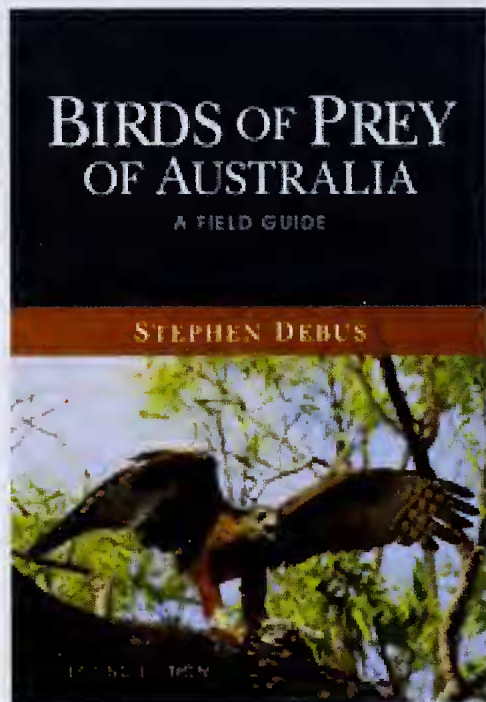
by Stephen Debus

Publisher: *CSIRO Publishing, Melbourne, 2 edn, 2012. 208 pages, paperback.*  
*ISBN 9780643104365. RRP \$39.95.*

Over the past few decades we have seen a steady supply of specialist bird books to an ever increasing and appreciative audience. The original edition of this book has been completely revised and updated with new sections. This book is one of many, and like others has both good and not so good aspects. It remains for the reader to consider these for a brief period then delve into the meat of the subject much as a raptor does into its prey.

Obviously produced for the avid enthusiast lacking access to world literature obtainable through specialist journals, the current book summarises this information into readable text without the scientific jargon, which might otherwise leave readers floundering. Also the author includes his own and colleagues' observations in the work and it becomes a medium for this extensive knowledge to be spread and assimilated.

The book is in two parts preceded by a very readable introductory section that captures the essence of the study of those diurnal birds known collectively as 'birds of prey' or 'raptors'. Subjects include information describing what these are, behaviour and breeding, rehabilitating injured or sick birds, conservation and taxonomy and range of the group. The first major part is the field guide containing species information. This includes information on age



plumages, sizes and finally well executed illustrations provided by the accomplished wildlife artist Jeff Davies. Part 1 concludes with a section titled 'Difficult species-pairs' illustrating similarly plumaged birds which are often difficult to separate or identify in the wild. It also

includes a large number of colour images of all species indicating patterns and colours attributable to individual species which will surely aid and assist observers.

Part 2 constitutes a handbook providing detail about each species. Birds are separated into nine subgroups, each having an introduction followed by detailed information not included within Part 1. Much has been previously published, but the gems are new data incorporated within this text. As in the introductory paragraphs, information on characteristics, diet, behaviour and threats and conservation are presented, although now these comments are directed to individual subgroups/species.

*Birds of Prey of Australia* concludes with chapters summarising its content and listing numerous references. The 13 chapters cover aspects as varied as conservation, human impacts, pests and pollution. A glossary and literature list follow, each well researched and presented. Overall the book supplies a welcoming market and is a volume that every avid bird researcher (amateur or professional) should have readily available. Information is easily gleaned; illustrations cover all aspects of field identification and provide extremely useful information at home or work—especially where injured birds are presented for rehabilitation. The price is comparable to that of similar works on other subjects and is not daunting. It is a worthy replacement for the first edition.

Those are the good points. The not so good aspects are (once again) the book's size: unless you have a backpack it is a difficult size to carry if it really is intended to be a 'field guide'. Within the pages there is repetition and the author appears to have a long-held grievance against windfarms. These modern engineering developments are dotting the landscape in areas also occupied by birds of prey. Simply, the two do not mix but until proper studies are concluded it is not worthy continuing to write on subjects that have little basic study here in Australia. Firm evidence should be obtained and published to back up future comments. Page 58 has a section 'Unconfirmed vagrants'. I often see similar sections in books and articles offering information on what was or might be (I am guilty of it myself). Surely these species can be ignored until substantive confirmation is obtained, for instance a standard similar to the international convention that if an animal hasn't been seen for 50 years it is considered to be extinct. The obvious erroneous record of *Butastur teesa* could be removed; if another appears then by all means reintroduce the original record.

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## Australian Lizards: A Natural History

by Steve K Wilson

Publisher: CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood, Victoria, 2012. 196 pages, paperback, colour illustrations. ISBN 9780643106406. RRP \$49.95

A childhood encounter with a lizard made an indelible impression on Steve Wilson, as it has done for many kids. That this quickly turned into a passion, and thence into obsession, was undoubtedly facilitated by the fact, demonstrated early in his latest book *Australian Lizards: a natural history*, that lizards can be found almost everywhere in this country, except in the most urbanised southern cities.

Wilson is the author of several books, most notably the national field guide *A Complete Guide to Reptiles of Australia*, which is updated every few years to keep up with the latest taxonomical changes. In effect, that book is the (necessarily clinical) identification guide to Australian reptiles, whilst this latest book provides the intriguing details that underpin the lives of these animals. A superb photographer, Wilson's